

Notton House School

Notton School House, 28 Notton, Lacock, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 2NF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The academy provides a 38-week per year educational provision for boys aged eight to 19 years with social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or speech, language and communication difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, there were 25 residential pupils. The residential accommodation is provided for pupils in eight distinct areas on the academy site.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 4 May 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children like being at the school and staying in the residential provision. They say that they feel safe and like the staff who care for them. Children are confident at sharing their worries or concerns with staff. They feel that their views and ideas are valued.

Children are supported to take part in a wide range of activities. Some children are members of local clubs such as army cadets, and others enjoy bike riding and swimming. Children particularly like using the school's gaming suite and the residential gaming room. Staff ensure that children do not spend all of their time gaming and support them to do a range of other activities that support their physical and emotional well-being.

Children like the residential accommodations. These areas are personalised by the group of children living there and are decorated and furnished to a good standard. There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the residential areas. Ample games and equipment are available for children throughout the provision to ensure children are well occupied and enjoy their boarding time. Access to the residential areas is by key fob, which is managed by staff. Children can leave the area when they choose but must be let back in by staff. School leaders should review this system to enable children to be given appropriate access to their residential area. When on duty, every member of residential staff has a walkie-talkie. The noise from these devices can be heard throughout the residential areas and detracts from the homely atmosphere the staff and children have created.

Children have a spacious, welcoming dining area. Food is varied and nutritious. It is served canteen style, with children choosing from hot and cold options that they can mix and match. Each of the residential areas has its own kitchen, providing children with the opportunity to make snacks and drinks.

Staff know the children well and help them to make progress. Children's support plans are current and provide clear guidance for staff on how staff are to help children to develop their independence skills and to prepare them for the next stage of their lives. Children contribute their ideas to these plans and identify personal goals, which staff help them to achieve.

The 'well-being hub' offers children a safe space, individually or as a group, to explore their feelings, worries or concerns. Children particularly benefit from the 'open house' times at the hub when they visit to have a hot drink and a chat. This helps children to prepare for the afternoon lessons. The family liaison person provides good support for parents and carers. The work and support of the therapy team are integral to helping children to develop and supporting them and their families.

The system in place for the administration and storage of children's medication is clear and appropriate. However, staff in one area are not consistently following the recording process when children are absent from school. Children's medication is stored in locked medication cabinets. However, in three areas, four children's individual medication tins were unlocked, which is a breach of the school's storage policy. This has not had an impact on the children so far but has the potential to do so if it is not remedied.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of safeguarding and the role they play in keeping children safe. Staff have developed effective working relationships with parents, social workers and other professionals and use these relationships to share important information about the children. Records of safeguarding events show that concerns were reported swiftly and managed well. School leaders monitor these events closely, and learning from safeguarding events is used to improve practice and inform staff training.

Behaviour is appropriately managed. There was an increase in the use of restraint in the first two terms of this year. This was due to a small number of children who were going through a particularly difficult and uncertain time. Through meaningful conversations after incidents, staff enabled the children to develop an understanding of their behaviours and find other ways to manage their feelings. Children are helped to identify ways that staff can help them when they are feeling worried or upset.

Overall, records of restraint have improved, but further improvement is needed as there are still examples of staff using language that is vague, emotive or institutionalised. Records of restraints since 23 October 2022 demonstrate an improvement in the quality of the recording because of increased and more effective oversight by the head of welfare.

At times, staff have searched children's belongings when they have been worried that children have brought inappropriate items into school, including drugs, cigarettes and lighters. On occasion, a 'wand' metal detector has been used to search for items held by children. The use of all searches is reviewed on a regular basis and ceases when there is no longer an identified risk.

Staff are not risk-averse. They understand the thresholds of risk for children in ways that help them to develop their understanding of risk and find ways to stay safe. Risk assessments are created that are easy to follow, with clearly identified triggers and preventative action for staff to take.

Incidents of bullying are low. When they do happen, appropriate action is taken. Anti-bullying work is linked to the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. The PSHE curriculum is flexible, so it can respond to events

within the school and the wider community. The school is currently appointing anti-bullying ambassadors.

Safer recruitment practices are effectively implemented.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

School leaders have a realistic vision for the school. They implement actions from their development plans to make ongoing improvements in the school and residential provision.

Staff are positive about working at the school and about the leadership team. They feel well supported and listened to. Staff benefit from regular reflective supervision that helps to develop their practice. School leaders consult with staff and use the findings from this consultation to improve the working conditions and develop the staff's skills.

Staffing levels are appropriate for the children who currently stay in the residential provision. Staff rotas are well organised and clear to ensure that there is adequate staffing and that staff have sufficient time during the day to complete paperwork and other tasks. On two occasions this year, some aspects of the residential provision closed because staff absence meant there was not enough staff. These closures were temporary and short-lived.

Complaints are managed effectively and overseen by school leaders to ensure actions are completed in full. Complaints are handled sensitively, and care is taken to address complex issues with families.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that children have access to their residential area without having to ask staff.
- School leaders should review the use of walkie-talkies to ensure their use by staff does not interfere with the homely environment and atmosphere in the residential areas.
- School leaders should ensure that behavioural events are clearly recorded and eliminate the use of vague and/or emotive language used to describe children's behaviours.
- School leaders should ensure that the system used to store medication is consistently implemented. In addition, school leaders should ensure that staff consistently complete children's medication sheets when children are not in school.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC039112

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Michelle Reysenn

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Joy Howick, Social Care Inspector

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